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ABSTRACT

This article explores the measures that administrators take, and can take, to promote inclusive practice in racially/ethnically diverse schools. It describes a study that examined how administrators initiate and sustain dialogue with their various school constituencies. Interviews were conducted with 35 administrators, most of whom were principals, and most of whom were from one large school district. Responses suggest that the principal's role, important in any school, is even more important in culturally diverse schools. Many of the principals interviewed believed that engaging in dialogue with all those associated with the school is important in diverse environments. Key elements of the dialogical relationship were identified as establishing connections with, listening to, learning from, and educating others. Principals in the study mentioned a number of techniques that they used to encourage dialogue, emphasizing attentive listening. Dialogue was seen to be a powerful vehicle for promoting the inclusion of diverse perspectives, views, values, and knowledge in the day-to-day operation of schools. (Contains 44 references.) (SLD)

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INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP FOR ETHNICALLY DIVERSE SCHOOLS: INITIATING AND SUSTAINING DIALOGUE

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OISE/UT

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> Our fundamental educational problem today is not one of turning schools into better engines of increased economic productivity and growth, or of finding more and more directive ways to inculcate students with a body of "basic facts" that we presume they need to know. It is in finding ways to involve schools in creating and maintaining conditions in which inclusive, democratic, and open-ended dialogue can thrive. Such an endeavor is basic to our individual flourishing and to fostering the social-political development of equality and freedom. (Burbules, 1993, p. 151).

Administrators of our schools face many challenges these days. Perhaps most pressing of these involve responding to increasing levels and qualities of diversity. Many of these diversity challenges revolve round race and ethnicity. Changing patterns of immigration over the past twenty years and burgeoning local populations, among other things, have brought issues of race and ethnicity to the attention of many people, including educators. The fact that most immigrants to Western countries now emigrate from countries other than those located in Northern and Western Europe means that many teachers find their classes populated with students who come from a wide range of backgrounds. Unfortunately, school curricula and activities do not always acknowledge the backgrounds, perspectives, values, voices and knowledge of all students and community members. A major challenge for administrators, therefore, lies in providing inclusive education for schools that challenge those exclusive practices that generate unequal opportunities and outcomes for students.

This article explores the measures that administrators take, and can take to promote inclusive practice in racially/ethnically diverse schools. In particular, it describes a study that examines how administrators initiate and sustain dialogue with their various school constituencies. First, the notion of inclusive practice is outlined. Then, the idea of what an inclusive leadership practice might include is discussed. Next, I make the connection between inclusive leadership and dialogue, and further outline a perspective on this connection. Then, I describe the methods and document how administrators talk about initiating and sustaining educative dialogues within their respective school communities. A discussion of these findings follows.

Inclusive Leadership for Diverse Schools

The notion of inclusive leadership *per se* rarely shows up in the literature. The concept of inclusion, on the other hand, is something that scholars have explored more often. For the most part, inclusion is concerned with student (dis) ability (e.g. Thomas et al., 1997). More recently, however, those exploring inclusion have expanded the concept to encompass not just

(dis) ability, but also other axes of disadvantage such as age, gender, class, and race/ethnicity, among others (Dei et. al., 1997: Dei, 1998; Boscardin & Jacobsen, 1997). How do these scholars see inclusion? Thomas et. al. (1997), for example, view inclusive schooling as total and complete accommodation. Inclusive schools welcome, accommodate and celebrate diversity, uniqueness and individuality. One way of understanding inclusion, according to Thomas et. al. (1997), is to look at it through its antonym -- exclusion. When exclusion is taken to the extreme, it leads to segregation, isolation and stigmatism of those who are deemed to be different. Inclusive practice, on the other hand, seeks to counteract all these tendencies. In doing so, it promotes and values a type of solidarity based on a complementarity of similarity and diversity (Boscardin & Jacobsen, 1997).

Dei et. al. (1997) and Dei (1998) take the concept and practice of inclusion one step further. This work highlights the place of power in exclusive/inclusive practice. Dei believes that the process of teaching, learning and sharing knowledge revolves around power relationships. It is these power relationships that determine, for example, what knowledge is valued, who transmits it, and how this knowledge interchange is organized. Inclusive practice confronts these often unequal and exclusionary relationships of power. In adopting such practices, school administrators and educators develop a commitment to power sharing in schools. In doing so, they extend to students, teachers, parents and local communities, joint responsibilities over the process of education. Such arrangements can, among other things, entrench a diverse range of perspectives in the curriculum, and as a result, make schools more inclusive places. In such schools, traditionally marginalized students would ideally be provided with more opportunities, perform better, and in doing so, ultimately increase their life chances.

On the other hand, inquiry into inclusive leadership practices, much less leadership itself, in racially/ethnically diverse settings is decidedly limited. Research into this crucial area of leadership in these contexts is, with a couple of exceptions (Gue, 1976), just in its beginning stages. Even so, a number of scholars (Reyes & Capper, 1991; Valverde, 1988; Anderson, 1990, 1996; Lipman, 1998; Derkatz, 1996; McKeown, 1989; Ryan, 1997; Ryan & Wignall, 1996; Maxcy, 1998; May, 1994) are beginning to build a useful body of knowledge on the subject. More often than not, however, the empirical studies in this area tend to point out the shortcomings of the administrators and their leadership practices as they attempt to foster some elements of inclusive education (Reyes & Capper, 1991; Anderson, 1990, 1996; Lipman, 1998; Ryan & Wignall, 1996). One notable exception is May's (1994) insightful account of Richmond Road School in New Zealand and its principal, Jim Laughton. May describes, in detail, the leadership practices that facilitated inclusive forms of practice. In particular he highlights the power sharing,

community, educative, and dialogical aspects to the inclusive practice of leadership at Richmond Road.

Leadership efforts at Richmond Road targeted debilitating practices that routinely penalized students from so-called minority cultures. Through these initiatives, the school sought to share power with the community. It took steps to make the school an inviting place for community members, and to include them in decision-making, the delivery and construction of the curriculum, and other school events. Richmond Road successfully extended status to all participants through its cultivation of participatory, reciprocal, non-hierarchical relationships. Hence, leadership emerged not as something that was associated with one individual, namely the principal in this case, but as a community phenomenon. Leadership in this view is less the result of the actions of remarkable or unremarkable individuals than the consequence of interactions and negotiations among members of communities. Foster (1989), for example, believes that those who have been dubbed as exemplary leaders are able to accomplish what they do not exclusively by virtue of their individual attributes, but by the fact that they are able to take advantage of what might be called a "corridor of belief" that exists in their communities or constituencies at the time. They do not so much create new universes as enter those corridors and open the various doors. In this regard, leadership is not the exclusive property of enlightened individuals or for that matter, managers:

> Leadership ... is just not the property of enlightened individuals. The idea that leadership occurs within a community suggests that ultimately leadership resides in the community itself. To further differentiate leadership from management we could suggest that leadership is a communal relationship, that is, one that occurs in a community of believers. Leadership then is not a function of position but rather represents a conjunction of ideas where leadership is shared and transferred between followers and leaders... leaders and followers become interchangeable (Foster, 1989, p. 49).

Because Richmond Road School promoted the practice of community leadership, it also recognized the importance of educating the community. These efforts went beyond merely theorizing about, or understanding, practice, however. Here, the educational community took advantage of the opportunities presented it to ask why things were done, and in whose interests these practices worked. In other words, it pursued knowledge like scholars such as Friere (1970), Giroux (1986), Fay (1987), Smyth (1989) and others advocate, for political ends. Smyth (1989), for example, sees the function of leadership as educative, as one of assisting community members to recognize and do something about the systematic ways in which they and others are penalized. He believes that leadership practices can enable people

to unmask their own self-understandings. By providing them with knowledge about their situations and themselves, such practices can reveal the way in which they and others collude in their own misfortunes . Among other things, Richmond Road provided its teaching staff with many opportunities to learn about themselves and the world by building forms of staff development into their weekly routines. In doing so, the school looked to provide these individuals with a critical and reflective knowledge base for teaching and learning from which to contest unjust forces at work in the school and community, and as a consequence, make it a more inclusive place (May, 1994).

A key in establishing inclusive communities through education in schools is dialogue (Smyth, 1989; Lipman, 1998; Maxcy, 1998; May, 1994; Botch & Roy 1997; Tierney, 1993; Short & Greer, 1997; Robinson, 1996). Smyth (1989) maintains that if schools are to be places of inquiry then the values and activities pursued will be a consequence of a dialogue about the nature of schooling. Communities of the sort we are talking about here simply do not happen. They can only become established and sustained through the enablement of mutual dialogues of respect and difference (Tierney, 1993). Towards this end leadership can create conditions that foster these kinds of dialogues. Ideally the right kind of leadership can make it possible for men, women and children who are associated with these school communities to engage in dialogues about their place in society and within their own communities, learn from these dialogues, and as a result, be in a position to take action to make their institutions and the wider society places that acknowledge and honour a wide of range of differences.

While the above scholars touch on the practice of dialogue and leadership, they do not go into any depth. Indeed with a few exceptions in the area of women and leadership for example (Blackmore, 1989, 1995, 1996; Shakeshaft & Perry, 1996; Wodak, 1996; Kurty, 1995; Young et. al., 1993) this area remains virtually unexplored. This paper looks to address this lack by describing the leadership efforts of principals to initiate and sustain dialogues between and among their respective schools' various constituencies. Before moving on to this account, however, I will elaborate on the concept and practice of dialogue.

Dialogue

According to Burbules (1993), dialogue is a communicative relation into which two or more people enter. Dialogues emerge as participants contribute alternating statements of varying duration. These become part of continuous and developmental sequences. Friere (1970) maintains that these dialogical relationships "seal" participants together. They "carry away" participants in a unique type of interaction that takes on a force and direction

of its own (Burbules, 1993). Dialogues often lead people beyond their intended goals to new and unexpected insights. No one consciously guides them. As the flow of these exchanges take over, the participants are absorbed, that is, caught up in them. These interactions are generally guided by a spirit of discovery and strategies of exploration and interrogation. It is through such practices that those who partake in them seek to achieve meaningful understandings and agreements.

Burbules (1983) contends that dialogical interactions display both cognitive and affective attributes. On the one hand, participants have much to learn from such interactions. On the other hand, however, they have to invest certain emotions in these relationships if they are to succeed. With respect to the former, dialogical relationships have a strong pedagogical element to them. In other words, participants can learn much from one another in these interactions. Dialogue, according to Burbules (1993), is an activity that is directed toward discovery and new understanding. It stands to improve the knowledge, insight and sensitivity of the participants. Dialogue presents parties with an opportunity to know more about themselves, the world and others. As we converse with others we can teach these partners, they can teach us, and we can teach ourselves.

Yet dialogue involves much more than simply acquiring information. According to Friere (1970) and Shor and Friere (1987), dialogical encounters can help participants develop not only personal, but also political awareness. Here, the goal of dialogue is to enable the less fortunate to free themselves from the shackles of their helplessness and dependency. Through the medium of dialogue men, women and children will not only be able to learn about life, but also develop a capacity for cultural criticism. Dialogue serves as a powerful tool to help members of their communities to recognize injustice, and to empower them to act against it. Ideally, dialogue would empower students, staff and others by nurturing social identities that affirm their race, class, and gender positions, and provide them with the basis for deliberation and social action (Ellsworth, 1989).

Proponents of dialogue assert that communications that revolve around dialogue foster conditions that allow the voices of all participants to be heard. This does not mean, however, that everyone will always come to a consensus. Instead, it represents a starting point for grasping others' points of view. Advocates believe that it allows participants to publicly identify institutional barriers that inhibit mutual understanding and consensus (Burbules, 1993). For this to happen, certain conditions must occur. For example, everyone must have an equal opportunity to speak, all members must respect other members' rights to speak out, all must feel safe to speak and all ideas must be tolerated and subjected to rational critical assessment (Ellsworth, 1989). Some scholars have spent considerable time and effort elaborating on complex schemes of this sort. Habermas (1987), for example,

advocates what he refers to as an Ideal Speech Situation. For this to occur he maintains that these settings must be characterized by the comprehensibility, truth, sincerity and rightness of the statements that constitute the dialogue. Each participant must have an equal opportunity to initiate and continue the conversation, to make assertions, recommendations and explanations and to explain their wishes, feelings and desires.

For these strategies to work, Burbules (1993) insists that participants also need to have an emotional investment in them. He insists that what draws participants into dialogical relationships are feelings towards others -- the pleasures we derive are not purely intellectual. Some of what is said in these situations, like statements of encouragement, for example, are attempts to create and maintain bonds of mutual concern. Burbules (1993) contends that in dialogues we attempt to be fully with our partners, to engage them, because there is more at stake that just the topic at hand. A number of feelings are particularly important here. Trust is one of these feelings. Where there is an element of risk, participants need to know that they can rely on someone or something. They need to know that they can depend on another's good will. One way to engender trust in others is to introduce certain sensitive and personal disclosures. Besides trust, other feelings enhance dialogues -- respect, appreciation and affection for others. Hope can also play an important part in initiating and sustaining dialogues.

Most of those who have explored the pedagogical possibilities of dialogue have looked at it from a teacher/student context. Friere (1970), for example, conceives of dialogue as the means through which teacher and students are sealed together in a joint act of knowing and reckoning the object of study. The educator's role here is to pose problems about situations in order to help learners arrive at a more critical view of their realities.[1] Of course, educational dialogues need not be restricted to formal learning relationships. As illustrated above, school communities have much to gain from dialogues that occur outside of classrooms. Among other things, they have the potential to help school communities work towards providing inclusive educational environments both inside of the classroom and out. It is here that school administrators, by virtue of their positions, have much to contribute. They are well located to foster conditions that encourage educational dialogues in their respective communities. This article describes a study that outlines the measures that school principals took to encourage these dialogues.

Methods

The study described here is part of a larger study which explored the ways in which administrators responded to increasing levels of racial/ethnic diversity. This particular phase consisted of face-to-face interviews. In all, myself and a research assistant conducted 35 interviews, mostly with

principals. In four cases, we talked to vice principals because the principals were either unavailable or the principal believed that the vice principal might know more about the specifics of our topic. In a few cases both principals and vice-principals were present for the interview. Approximately two-thirds of the administrators were from one large school district. This school district was a very diverse one. The southern part was largely urban, while the northern end was almost exclusively rural. Over the last decade or so, this district has experienced a change in the makeup of the student population. Where once most students were of European, largely Anglo, heritage, many schools, particularly in the southern parts of the district, now have substantial non-Anglo student populations. This stands in marked contrast to many of the northern areas which still remain in much the same state as they were twenty years ago. These changes have caught some educators somewhat by surprise. A number of teachers, most of whom are Anglo, find themselves unprepared to meet the challenges that these changes have brought.

We chose other administrators at random. These people were referred to us by administrators and teachers. About half of these administered schools in districts that were in the process of rapid change, like the one referred to above. The other half worked in districts where diversity has been acknowledged for longer periods of time. In one such district, the high numbers of those not of European heritage have dictated that educators pay attention to the diverse nature of this urban community for over two decades now. In many respects, this district has been at the fore of anti-racist and multicultural education. Slightly more of the administrators we talked to were in the elementary panel, while male and female participants were evenly divided. For the most part, we met with these people at their places of work, and talked with them in their offices.

Regardless of where the administrator worked or whether the administrator was a principal or a vice-principal, we attempted in our questioning to explore how these people responded to diversity challenges in their school communities. Originally we attempted, using a Leithwood and Stager (1989) framework, to discover how principals made decisions in this area. We focused on how they interpreted the various issues, what goals they set for themselves, what principles they followed and what constraints they experienced as they attempted to attain these goals. We directed our questions to the areas of (1) curriculum and instruction, (2) students and teachers, (3) the community, (4) school organization and structure, and (5) resource allocation. Although we wanted to explore these areas, the questions we asked were open-ended enough to allow administrators to talk about areas of concern to them that we had not anticipated. Also, as the study proceeded and themes became evident we pursued them. One of the most prominent themes was dialogue. We recognized after the first few interviews that this issue was something that was important to most of the

administrators, so we followed up on this theme in the subsequent interviews. Eventually I assembled all the relevant data on the topic, and wrote it up.

The Principal's Influence

While the principal's role in any school is important, it may be that much more critical in culturally diverse schools. This is because the principal may face many more, or at least different, challenges than he or she does in a monocultural school. Also, the principal generally has more influence in the school than most other individuals. This is something many administrators acknowledge. Wilbur for example, contends that

> teachers will treat students the way the principal treats them ... and maybe that works, I don't know. But I've had many staff say to me: "Well, the reason for the atmosphere in the school is what you set down from the office." It starts right here. And if it doesn't start here it can't happen. What I have become aware of in the past few years is the enormous influence I have -- not necessarily power -- but the enormous capacity to influence the day-to-day operation of this school and the relationships within the school setting.

Cathy believes that the principal's role has changed over the last few years, and will continue to change. As a consequence, she believes that the position of principal is "going to need an increasingly skilled person." These skills will be required, as Julie contends, to bring out "some of the cultural diversity that tends to disappear." In influencing the day-to-day operations of their schools, principals of culturally diverse schools see their roles as multi-faceted. Many principals, however, give a high priority to their role as communicators. Kevin, for example, believes that the principal's role, and in particular his or her ability to communicate, in a "multicultural" school is critical.

> The principal's critical, absolutely critical, in handling a multicultural school. The principal's got to have an understanding and has got to be able to get that understanding across to the rest of the staff. And if you don't have the right principal in a multicultural school, you'll never have a successful multicultural school.

These principals believe it is important to connect with those in their school community. The best way to do this, many contend, is to engage in dialogue with their various constituents. In doing so, they endeavor to listen to them, learn from them, and to educate them. As is evident above, principals are in good positions to foster such dialogues, given their relative

power in school communities. In what follows, I describe how they go about providing the conditions that foster these kinds of dialogue.

Engaging in Dialogue

Many principals believe that engaging in dialogue with all those associated with the school is important in diverse environments. Key elements of the dialogical relationship include establishing connections with, listening to, learning from and educating others.

Connecting

Before principals can employ some of strategies mentioned above to enhance their actual dialogues, administrators first need to establish conditions that make dialogical interchanges possible. Many see "connecting" with others as an important part of their jobs. This involves opening up communication channels with others in the school community. Edward believes that it is vital that principals -- particularly those in large and/or multicultural schools -- "keep open communications." Among other things, it involves initiating, developing and maintaining relationships with others. Mary Jane is one who puts in time developing networks and connections. She does "a lot of informal networking. I do it with staff; I do it with kids in the hall; I try to build bridges that way, take a personal interest but also do some of my negotiating with staff and my connections with parents." Edward believes that it is "important to keep in touch with the folk." Clark, on the other hand, looks at himself as a type of liaison between the different individuals and constituencies in the school community.

Initiating these connections is an important way to convey to parents that educators care about students. It is also a way of engendering the trust and respect that is necessary for dialogues to take place. Jennifer is one principal who recognizes the need for administrators to let parents know that they care for their kids. She says

> One of the things we do here is spend a lot of time in direct contact with parents. I think [it is important to have] parents think you care about their kids and you want to help them work things through, that you're in touch with them, that caring is also part of your discipline .... I think we've gained a lot of ground with that. It takes a lot of time, though. I spend a lot of time on the phone and in person.

Making oneself visible and accessible may engender interactions with people. Derek, for example, believes that his visibility and accessibility put him in a position to put the ensuing interactions to good use. He says

> The more interaction you have with somebody, the more agreement you find you've got. So then when you disagree it's not such a big deal. If the only time you ever have anything to do with anybody is when you disagree, it's pretty tense. So I think the more positive situations you can create, where you're getting along and making things work, the better off you are when there's something that's going to cause you problems.

Administrators, however, are not always in a position to engage in these kinds of interactions all the time. On the contrary, there are constraints to doing this kinds of things, important as they may be. One of the main barriers is time. Principals do not always have the time to engage in the type of interactions that would best connect them with members of the school community. Pat, for example, maintains that "our problem is time. How do we get out and talk to parents and get them in here talking to us? How do we get time to talk to kids regularly?"

Despite difficulties, principals do have strategies for connecting with people. One of them is to advertise an "open-door policy." Wilbur operates under such a policy. He makes sure everybody understands that they can come and see him any time. He says

> I have an open-door policy for kids and staff. Kids see me all day, and when people ask me if I have time to see kids I say, "Yes, I always have time to see kids and the other things have to go." It's very rare that a kid comes to me and has to wait more than five minutes to see me unless I'm in a meeting here or I'm away. And that happens the same with staff. And one of the things this lady said during our meeting with parents and business people was that one of the positive things [about] this school was that if you wanted to talk to the principal you always got to talk to him, and if you didn't talk to him right away he always called back. Which is part of my commitment to parents. If you call me I'm going to find you.

While such a practice may encourage some people to approach the principal, it will not be enough to reach all the individuals that some believe should be reached. At some point then, the principal must come out of his or her office. Going to meet others in more public places or on their home territory goes a long way in engendering the trust and respect that must accompany dialogical interchanges if they are to be successful Some of the principals to whom we talked make this effort. These people make a point of walking the halls, visiting classrooms, attending community events, and visiting people in their homes. A number of secondary school principals believed strongly in the value of walking the halls of their schools. Pat, for example says that

> the best single piece of advice that I would give you, that I gave all my vice-principals and that I demand of them, is that you keep in touch ... out in the halls of the school, not in an office. I walk every hall of this school three times a day. And I don't think you can be casual about it; I think you have to institutionalize it because otherwise you don't go.

Pat maintains that there is much potential for meaningful interactions in these hallway forays. He says, "the kids know I'm the principal of the school and they'll talk to me, and I talk to them." They also provide opportunities for principals and students to get to know one another. Wilbur is another principal who "is not a desk principal" and who believes that "it's really important that I be out there." Among other things, he believes that students not only know who the principal is, but that they also have a chance to talk with him and to get to know him. Wilbur takes pains to avoid situations at other schools where students not only don't know the principal, but wouldn't be able to pick him or her out of a line-up. Clark, on the other hand, cannot say enough about the importance of getting to know students. He makes a concerted effort to get out, to talk to kids and to get to know them. For Clark it is an essential part of his job. He says

> I know them all. You make a point of it. You walk around. You make sure that you talk to the kids. If somebody is doing something in a play you make a point of knowing that is going on. I think half the success of this job is knowing the kids. If you don't know them, you are going to get killed.

Getting out of the office, however, inevitably involves more than connecting with students and teachers in the rest of the school. Principals inevitably have to connect with those who reside in the wider community. Making these relationships work, particularly within a diverse community, necessarily requires that a certain level of comfort accompany these efforts. Al, for example, maintains that

> once you get outside ... and into the larger structure or the parent community, much more of what you do there, if not almost all of it, is voluntary. So when people volunteer to be exposed to some discussion of ideas, developing an adequate comfort level for them ... is particularly important. And I think what you don't want to do is lose the opportunity to make the first connection.

Principals have a number of strategies for connecting with parents and members of the community. Heather, for example, keeps an eye out for parents before and after school. She says, "You watch for them, for these kids don't often walk back and forth to school by themselves; there's usually somebody there. I'm always on the lookout for so-and-so's dad or so-and-so's

uncle, or whatever, and I stop them and I say, "Do you know that his happened or that happened," or "we're having this at the school." She also claims that it helps to be an "involved" principal." Heather says that "I was always at the counter. I was the one that took the kids home. I kept up that constant communication."

Other principals attempt to get "out into the community." Roger, for example, says, "I did a lot of stuff in the community. I spoke to community groups... I did a lot of that kind of stuff with parents and I dialogued with them." Malcolm also believes that it is important for principals to move out beyond the school walls. One of the first things he did after being appointed principal was to go out and learn about the community. He remembers at the time telling his vice principal

> "I'm going to take three months. I'm going to visit classes, I'm going to talk to parents, I'm going to learn about the community, drive in the community." I went to a few community meetings, made myself visible, who I am, just as a visitor and a listener, to see what I'd meet up with in my student population and parents. [This] was on my own time in the evenings. I had to learn about these things and I said, "I've got to know how to understand, meet parents on an equal basis... I found that it was very important to put a name to a face, a face to a name. And when I got to know the parent I started greeting them by name: Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so, Miss So-and-So. And they said, "Gee whiz, how can you remember my name when you have so many other students? You only met me once?" I don't know. I did it.

At times, it may be necessary for principals to meet with parents on their own home turf. This is one way to engender the feelings necessary for initiating and sustaining the dialogue that is necessary for solving problems. Roberta is one administrator who sees the need to visit community members. She recalls what she did when a particular problem arose.

> And the first thing I did when the trouble started was call her and say, "May I come over and visit you?" And she said, "Yes, of course." And I came over and after the initial discussions she offered me a coffee. And with ... families, the same thing: to go over and be offered a cup of coffee. And you never refuse when you're offered something, even if it's bitter.

While providing the conditions for dialogues to take place is important, it is also necessary to employ strategies that enable participants to sustain the interaction. One thing a number of principals believe can engender such things as trust and respect in their constituents, and with it, a motivation to continue to talk, is a concerted commitment to listen to them.

Listening

A key aspect of engaging in dialogue with various constituencies then is a willingness to listen to individuals in the school community. Many principals emphasize the importance of listening skills in these diverse settings. They see it as part of an uniquely people-oriented job. Robin, for example, insists that administrators

> need to learn to listen. Take a look at my desk. There are piles. I don't know what the piles are. But if 80% of my day is not people work, I am doing something wrong. It means you are putting your preconceptions and everything else on the shelf and sitting down and taking time to listen. Because most of this job is listening and listening well and making clear that you are hearing.

Barry also emphasizes the importance of listening. He points out that, "when it comes to parents or when it comes to students, I say, 'Always listen!'" Wilbur also "does a tremendous amount of listening and having kids talk." Listening practices may be ongoing as in Barry's, Wilbur's and Robin's case, or they may be introduced by someone new to the job. When Jake assumed his new position of principal, for example, he thought that it was important to have everyone's voices heard. And for him this meant that he and his fellow administrators had to do a lot of listening. When he first assumed his position

> the message went out loud and clear. People started being heard, and consequently they started participating... From what we listened to, and that was very much what we did for the first few months, we listened and listened and listened to what they had to say.

Learning

Learning generally follows the listening aspect of principals' dialogical efforts. Indeed the motivation behind listening is generally to respect the views and perceptions of others and to learn from them. A number of principals point out that learning is an important part of their function as communicators. For the most part, they look at this learning in two ways: *learning about*, and *learning from* the diverse groups that comprise the school community. Needless to say, there is often considerable overlap between these two faces of learning.

For many administrators the current levels of diversity have posed many challenges. Confronting these challenges means entering new and often unfamiliar territory. Mary expresses well how many principals'

approach this state of affairs. In attempting to respond to situations of this sort she says "you fly by the state of your pants, you really do. And you get information." Charles, on the other hand, notes that his job is to know his school community. He says

> You have to be aware of the changes that are going on in your community. That's my job, to make sure that you're not blind-sided, that you know what the dynamics are out there, the demographics, that there's a huge apartment complex going in three miles to the north or something like that. You've got to be aware of that.

Robin also supports the idea that administrators need to be prepared to learn. He recognizes that there are sources to which he can turn to acquire the kind of information necessary to serve the school community. He states

> We've had to learn... It's not that there's new knowledge out there. In a situation such as this what is most critical for me is to know what my best resources are, who are the people with knowledge and information. I use the term "good power" -- whether it's our multicultural environment or [something else] -- that will help me best serve. Our job is to serve the needs of kids, parents and the community at large. Therefore I need to know who are the people who can tell me needs that we may not be aware of. So that's the kind of knowledge -- it's people knowledge and it's good information.

Administrators have many sources with which they can consult. Indeed there are many people who have knowledge and information about many of things principals need to know. Most school districts either have people in their employ or within their reach. Some administrators believe that it is wise to first consult those with knowledge before commenting or acting. Clark, for example, says that

> What I have learned in this job so far is that you don't comment on things you are not an expert at. You don't offer opinions. That's really important. You ... base all your decisions on facts and then you'll stay out of trouble. Plus you generally make wiser decisions. So you rely on people who are the experts in the field.

There are also many opportunities for administrators to learn from others in and around the building through dialogue with them. Pat, for example, believes that he can learn much from walking the halls of his school. He says

> I learn more when I walk about the school than I would learn from fifty hours of going into classrooms. So my advice would be to go and do that. Keep your eyes open, your mouth shut and really get to know the place well. If you walk down a hall [once] in this school, you will learn nothing. If you walk down that same hall three times a day every day of the week, you can feel the change.

Erin feels that administrators have much to learn from the diverse communities that they serve. She contrasts this learning experience with her last placement.

> In a [diverse] community such as the one that we have, ... we have the opportunity to learn from our students and from our parents. They have such diverse backgrounds that it becomes very interesting in terms of our own daily experiences, to learn from them and it enriches all our experiences because of what we have learned.... I was vice-principal at another school last year that was a much more homogeneous community and I find the experiences here very interesting because I'm constantly learning, whereas the group I was with was very familiar to me in terms of their socio-economic cultural norms, religious backgrounds. And so this is much more of a learning experience for me and learning is a high priority for me.

Administrators can also learn from each other. Pat believes that fellow administrators can be very helpful in pointing out things that one may do without really thinking about it. He feels that most administrators probably have some racist tendencies that they have never quite realized or acknowledged. He points out that most people would probably say that

> "I'm not a racist. I'm very liberal and so I don't have a problem with all of these people coming in." You'd better take a step back because that's probably not true. We believe that there are all sorts of hidden things that we do in dealing with races different than us and we've got to be cognizant of them. And in admin we tell each other if it happens: "Hey I saw you talking to that kid, your body language was such-and-such."... One of the vice-principals in a meeting said to me, "Have you noticed the difference in the way you talk to Hong Kong families as opposed to South African families?" I said "there's no difference. I treat every family the same." "No" he said, "when a Hong Kong family comes in, and there's the mother and father and about eight kids, an auntie who's going to speak for them because none of them speak English, ... you're not always as warm and wonderful as you should be and you're sometimes patronizing"... And my instincts say "No. That's not true. I don't do that." But I do. I believe I do and I believe everybody does. You don't need to be a racist to have small shifts in the way you act toward people. And

so we can act as windows for each other and say, "Hey. Wait a minute. Here's what I saw."

As part of this learning experience, a number of principals speak of the importance of people's willingness to be reflective. Pat, for example, says that "you need to examine yourself very carefully about what kind of experience and background you bring to the role." Pauline also believes that as an administrators, she needs "to get in touch [her] own biases."

Educating Others

While acquiring knowledge is a vital part of the administrative role, it represents only one side of the dialogical function. Most administrators acknowledge that they are also responsible for passing information along to those in their school communities. They believe that informing teachers, students and members of their school communities constitutes a vital component of their roles.

Many principals feel that it is important to raise teachers', students' and parents' awareness about the realities of the school community by providing them with certain kinds of knowledge. Few, however, address this task in a political way. Elaine and Pauline are exceptions. Elaine says that "I see my role as being one of [raising] people's awareness. Before that, even of making sure that they are aware of what policy and procedure is in terms of multiculturalism.... what you're really trying to work is to develop that realization and honest appreciation and understanding." Pauline prefers to see this function as one that will "open their eyes to what is." She says that her role is to listen and not bury those negative things that aren't nice to look at" and to look at ... the underbelly and address the issues that are there." It is "also to open their eyes and give them more knowledge so that they feel comfortable in reflecting to me the negative aspects of how they feel and looking at ways of dealing with them." Pauline maintains that many of the problems teachers, students and parents encounter is the result of a lack of knowledge and "if you can give them that knowledge, then things start to change." Others put different spins on this educative aspect. Noreen, for example, maintains that it is important for all to "understand" their environment through awareness of it. But for her it is also a "sensitivity issue," particularly for educators. In her view, educators need to be sensitized to the issues that revolve around diversity. In this regard, Robin believes that his role is to have people "look at another side of a situation, not the other side, but another side of a situation."

Others administrators have a less political view of their educative role. Many of them have a number of strategies for providing knowledge and raising people's awareness on some of the more general features of the education system. They employ some of these for the purposes of getting

information to parents. Mary believes that she has a "responsibility to reiterate to the parents what the Ontario public schools are all about." Robin goes about this task through his parent-teacher groups. He stresses that this group is not responsible for fund-raising, but instead the emphasis is on "parent information and education." In their meetings they deal with such topics as early adolescence and its unique needs, responses to these needs and changes in family dynamics.

While administrators recognize the need to inform parents, they also see a need to pass information along to teachers and students. They may do this in fairly basic ways. Clark, for example, says, "usually we try to get the information out at staff meetings, or by memo, or both, or through department meetings." He also says that other methods of communicating information such as e-mail, public address announcements to classrooms, and a school handbook are also used. He notes, with frustration, that even though the school may employ all of these channels, there is no guarantee that messages will get through. He cites the case of a teacher not knowing an attendance policy even though it has been circulated in a written memo, by e-mail, on a student evaluation policy memorandum, in the school handbook and through department heads. Other administrators allude to more involved ways of passing along information to their staffs. A number recognize the need for more involved ways of transferring knowledge to staff. Pauline says, for example, that her "role is to PD staff as much as possible." As a consequence she attempts to build professional development opportunities into teacher's activities. She believes that these kinds of programs are crucial for schools located in diverse communities.

Principals also believe that modeling can play an important role in educating their communities. A more subtle form of dialogue, it is nevertheless, an effective way of raising awareness about diversity issues. School communities can learn much from the way administrators talk about these things and what they do about them. Wilbur, for example, believes that principals can send an important message to the rest of the school community through the things they say and do. He says

> There's the old theory that teachers will treat students the way the principal treats them. And maybe that works. But I've had my staff say to me, "Well, the reason for the atmosphere in the school is what you set down from the office." It starts right here. And if it doesn't start here, it can't happen.

Administrators may also encourage people to accept their views and visions by modeling the ideals associated with them. Kevin, for example, believes that by "living it [his vision], by talking about it," people will come to see it as "something really good." He believes that by modeling what he

believes to be correct behaviour, people accept his ideas. He feels that this approach works better than workshops.

> I think the message delivered by me again and again, and then the growing respect that the staff developed for me, I think that rubbed off on them. So in a way I have done six years of informal racism awareness and sensitivity training in the staff. I don't line them all up in the staff meetings and say "Okay today we're going to learn to deal with Sikhs." but I think just my attitude, my talking my philosophy, I think it rubs off on everybody else. I think that's how I did it ... by example. I think that ... provides much better results than a half-day workshop on racism to a staff, because most people in a half-day workshop will sit there and listen to it and walk away and forget everything they heard after two or three days.

Discussion

Increasingly, scholars (e.g. Dei et. al., 1997; Dei, 1998; Boscardin & Jacobsen, 1997) are recognizing the value of inclusive education in the quest to make schools more responsive to the increasing levels of diversity. Among other things, they believe that the inclusion of traditionally excluded values, knowledge, beliefs, backgrounds, perspectives and voices in the school curricula and decision-making processes will provide more opportunities for those who have not performed well in these institutions. One important aspect of inclusion is dialogue. Dialogue encourages the inclusion of those voices not normally heard and in doing so, acknowledges these perspectives. It would be naïve to think that dialogue in itself, however, can ensure that the marginalized can overturn the already entrenched power relationships, relationships that exclude them from many of the advantages others enjoy. Indeed critics have pointed to the shortcomings of such an approach. One of the more cogent detractors of the version of dialogue outlined above is Ellsworth (1989). She faults it on two counts. First, she contends that domination and subordination is not an "us" versus "them" thing. Instead, she contends that this relationship is a fluid and dynamic one. Those caught up in these relationships display not coherent and enduring subject positions, but ones that are multiple, contradictory and perpetually shifting. Among other things, this means that in one situation someone may be the oppressor, while in another, the oppressed. The other claim that Ellsworth (1989) challenges is the idea that it is possible in dialogical situations to ensure that all voices have an equal opportunity to be heard and that they all have equal weights and legitimacies. In her view, dialogue in the conventional sense is impossible because in our culture at this particular moment in time power relations between raced, classed and gendered students are unjust, and this asymmetry cannot be overcome in the classroom.

Ellsworth (1989) does not give up on the idea of dialogue, however. Instead of assuming that all participants will always have equal opportunities to speak and be heard, she sees dialogue as the means to build "coalitions among multiple shifting, intersecting and sometimes contradictory groups carrying unequal weights of legitimacy" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 317). Some scholars see dialogue as performing other functions. Drawing on Rorty and Bernstein, Burbules (1993) also assumes comparatively modest goals for dialogue. He believes that the end product should be seen as a means of simply keeping the conversation going. The bottom line is that whether making it possible for forging affinities, assisting the marginalized to have their voice heard, or simply as means to continue talking, dialogue has a role to play in efforts to establish inclusive practice.

Principals also have a role to play in establishing and sustaining inclusivity. One of the things they can do is to nurture the kinds of community leadership opportunities that Foster (1989) talks about. Indeed one does not have to be a remarkable individual to lead. Rather, all-too-human administrators can provide the conditions for inclusive educational communities to thrive by providing opportunities for communal relationships to emerge and by facilitating the sharing of ideas and actions. Principals are in an ideal position to foster such opportunities. As a number of the principals in the study acknowledge, they have the power to influence what happens in their respective schools in ways most others do not. Empirical studies (Derkatz, 1996) and commentaries (McKeown, 1989) emphasize the crucial role principals play in the way schools respond to diversity. Derkatz (1996, p. 1), for example, maintains that "the phrase, 'It's not the *school*, it's the *principal* of the thing', suggests that the administrator is the pivotal person in a position of power and leadership who acts to influence others in the school community and, as such, has the potential to create a major difference in the set of human relationships we call school."

Many principals in the study recognized the importance of dialogue and they also recognized their capacities and responsibilities in initiating it. As the data illustrate, these individuals sought to reach out to the various constituents in their school communities by making connections with them. To do this they adopted various strategies. Among other things, they attempted to illustrate that they care, and also made sure that they were accessible and visible. More than this though, these principals believed that they needed to get out of their offices and go to meet students, teachers, parents and community members on their own territory. Their focus on initiating and maintaining these kinds of connections is reflected in the literature on women leaders mentioned above (Blackmore, 1989, 1995, 1996; Shakeshaft & Perry, 1996; Wodak, 1996; Kurty, 1995; Young et. al., 1993). Much of this research emphasizes the fact that many women administrators tend to attend to the more relational and personal aspects of administration. Shakeshaft and Perry (1996), for example, maintain that women

administrators are more likely to employ interactional styles that are inclusive, participative and democratic. In their study, they found that women administrators, more so than the males, tended to ask and not tell, listened rather than lectured, using connecting language such as "we", and made personal and relational comments to make connections. Of course, not all scholars see these as uniquely feminine traits (e.g. Wodak, 1996). The findings of my study confirmed the latter view; both male and female administrators spoke of these things. What Shakeshaft and Perry (1996) and others point out, though, is that relational and dialogical strategies employed by many women are good for schools and students. Among other things, they promote inclusive school practices.

Principals in the study also mentioned a number of techniques that they used to encourage dialogue. One of these was attentive listening, something also that Shakeshaft and Perry (1996) observe in their women administrators. Many participants in the study recognized how important listening was. However, they were not able to go in detail about the kinds of strategies that they used. Whether or not they were aware of helpful techniques and employed them is open to question. There are a number of techniques that principals as listeners can employ to make dialogue work. Among other things, listeners can establish eye contact, keeping in mind that eye contact will be inappropriate in certain situations, and depending upon the audience, take up a suitable distance from the speaker. Listeners may also want to avoid interrupting the speaker, compare the speakers experience to their own, and ask questions (Drake & Ryan, 1994). Levi-Rasky (1993) suggests that in situations where dominant and non-dominant groups are engaged in dialogue, it is important for listeners from dominant groups to provide as much comfort as possible for the latter group to say what they have to say. In these circumstance she contends that listeners need to abandon any power or influence that they may have on the situation. Among other things, Levi-Rasky (1993) believes that listening involves (1) a displacement of oneself as "knower" and "evaluator"; (2) abandoning the desire to assign relative worth to observations; (3) a degree of self-reflection on privilege; (4) a suspension of personal authority; (5) a willingness to experience vulnerability, to admit one's ignorance. She also maintains that one may have to temporarily abandon one's identity. She uses the following citation from Delpit (1988, p. 297) to make her point.

> Listening requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds ... to put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment -- and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's gaze.

Principals also said little about the specific strategies that they employed to sustain their relationships and little about the things they did to enhance the actual dialogues with these people. This can be attributed to a number of things. For example, principals may not have given these strategies much thought; they may have taken them for granted; they did not, at the time of the interview, have the ability to articulate them; or they may simply not have put a lot of time or effort into them. There are, however, a number of things that principals can do to help support successful communicative relations over time. For example, they might attend to fostering what Burbules (1993) refers to as communicative virtues. These include, among others, qualities such as tolerance, patience, openness to give and receive criticism, a willingness to admit mistakes, a desire to reinterpret one's own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others, self restraint, a willingness and ability to listen thoughtfully and attentively, and a willingness to re-examine our own presuppositions and compare them with others. Burbules (1993) goes on to recommend a number of practical strategies that complement these virtues. He maintains that doing such things as restating what one's partner has said, using analogies that resonate with others' experiences, internal cross-referencing with the conversation, using vivid imagery, employing humour and volunteering new information can help involve people in the dialogue.

Principals also recognized the importance of the pedagogical aspect of dialogical relationships. It was apparent that they acknowledged that the educative aspects of dialogue can extend far beyond the formal educative aspects that Friere (1970) and Burbules (1993) write about. Principals saw three different sides to this. They acknowledged that it is in everyone's best interest to learn not just about others whom they did not know well, but also from them. Scholars (Smyth, 1989; Evans in Beck, 1994) have also noted the importance of the educative aspect of leadership. Evans (in Beck, 1994), for example, believes that administrative practice needs to be reconstituted from the ground up as pedagogic practice. He suggests that leaders need to understand the perspectives and values of others, and this may require temporarily suspending their own understanding of a situation. Sometimes though, administrators may need the help of their colleagues to help them understand others and their often taken-for-granted relationships. As in the case cited above, colleagues may notice things that individual administrators might not pick up about themselves. Such tactics may assist administrators in reflecting upon their understandings of others, their relationships with them, and the particular practices they use to engage them.

Many principals in the study recognized that they had an obligation not only to learn from and about others, but also to teach them. A number of scholars see this side of educative dialogue in political terms. Smyth (1989), Friere (1970), Shor & Friere (1987), for example, believe that employing dialogue to educate members of the educational community means that

educators and administrators would help them to see often taken-for-granted injustices and to do something about them. While a number of administrators in the study believed it was important to educate the various constituents, few saw this in political terms. Most devoted their time to informing community members about various aspects of the school and its curriculum. Besides passing this information along on an individual basis, administrators also organized more group-oriented sessions. The few that did allude to the political side of education spoke of exposing "the underbelly" and raising awareness of taken-for-granted aspects of people's lives.

The reluctance of school administrators to take up or confront these kinds of political issues is not new. Scholars have noted the often conservative tendencies of those who tend to occupy these offices. This may occur even in those instances where schools have adopted equity initiatives. In Lipman's (1998) study of educational reform, for example, the principal of one of the schools took pains to avoid any contentious issues, including in particular those that touched on racism. The result was that very little change occurred in the school that increased the opportunities of those students who persistently performed poorly. Understanding why administrators may take these kinds of actions or non-actions, requires as Anderson (1996) astutely points out, that we clarity who administrators actually work for. One might indeed seriously question the fact that many work for the marginalized. This is because, among other things, administrators are often more likely to respond to the wishes of politically astute parents of Anglo students, wishes that may work against the former (Ryan & Tucker, 1997; Lipman, 1998). Also the fact that many administrators are of the majority culture and have been socialized to see things from perspectives that do not always favour the view of the marginalized, or at the very least do not always permit them to see things from the viewpoints of the marginalized. In a study conducted by Anderson (1990) administrators simply could not see problems related to race; their ways of seeing rendered these issues invisible. Other administrators may simply favour their own Euro-centric practices when faced with a choice, and yet at the same time, maintain that they are sensitive, supportive and sympathetic to diversity issues (Ryan & Wignall, 1996).

Conclusion

While dialogue will always be an important dimension of inclusive leadership in all schools, it will be particularly vital in schools with racially/ethnically diverse student populations. Dialogue is a powerful vehicle for promoting the inclusion of diverse perspectives, views, values and knowledge in the day-to-day operations of schools. This does not suggest that engaging in dialogue will automatically ensure that all groups and individuals will be presented with the same kinds of opportunities or that the traditionally marginalized will immediately reap the same benefits from

school and life that those of the majority culture do. Dialogue can, however, provide members of the school community with opportunities to form coalitions to pursue their interests. Moreover, it can also generate conditions to keep conversations going. Perhaps the biggest challenge in introducing and sustaining meaningful dialogue in schools, however, will be to get administrators to acknowledge the plight of the marginalized. Many administrators, including a number in this study, fail to recognize that school curricula and other school processes do not work systematically in the interests of all groups. And even many who recognize this are not always prepared to take the type of action required to address these problems. Instead, they are more likely to avoid contentious issues such as those that involve racism. Yet, if schools are to provide equal life chances for all students then they need administrators who are willing and able to recognize, and more significantly, do something about the inequities that are part of our school systems. Dialogue can play an important role in this process. By introducing and sustaining conditions that foster dialogue, administrators can begin providing for the inclusion of various diverse perspectives -- perspectives that are now an integral part of our social landscape.

Notes

[1] But the learner in this sense is not just the recipient of facts. Instead the object to be known is put on the table between teacher and student who meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry.

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